

DPH Oral Health Program, AAP Delaware Chapter Promote Early Literacy, Dental Care Through Book Program

DOVER (SEPT. 28, 2021) The Delaware Division of Public Health Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services (BOHDS) has partnered with the Delaware Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (DEAAP) to promote literacy and good oral health habits by encouraging parents to find a dentist for their child by age 1.

In support of its mission to promote optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults in Delaware, the DEAAP recently established an Early Literacy Committee (ELC) tasked with engaging and supporting Delaware primary care pediatricians to promote early literacy from birth to five years. The DEAAP ELC's efforts are guided by its vision that "beginning at birth, every Delaware child is read to every day."

To help accomplish this goal, DEAAP and BOHDS are working to collaborate on the distribution of the Brush, Brush, Brush book to pediatric practices that are implementing the evidence-based Reach Out and Read (ROR) literacy program.

The book, which will be distributed during the 12-month well-child visit, promotes healthy habits using rhyme to engage and inspire little ones to brush their teeth. Included on the back of the book will be a sticker with the Bureau of Oral Health Dental Services Help Line that helps families find a dentist.

"The age 1 dental visit is important for several reasons in

that it allows for a positive dental experience for the child and family,” said Dr. Nick Conte, dental director for the Division of Public Health. “Not only does it create an opportunity for early identification of any developmental issues and preventive needs, more importantly it helps to foster a home environment where oral health is valued, and families have the knowledge and skills necessary to stay healthy and decay free.”

Pediatric practices expressing an interest in distributing the “Brush, Brush, Brush” book as part of the Reach Out and Read program will be contacted by a dental hygienist who will coordinate book delivery, engage in oral health conversations around available resources and supplies (toothbrushes, dental floss, toothpaste, etc.) and training for risk assessment and fluoride varnish application, as requested by the practice.

“The DE AAP ELC is excited to be collaborating with the Bureau of Oral Health and Dental Services on this initiative, said Stacey G. Fox, MD FAAP, Chair of the DE AAP Early Literacy Committee. “It is a win-win. With a fun gift for the child to keep, busy pediatricians are able to provide two essential messages simultaneously: the importance of reading with your child every day and how to keep their brand-new teeth healthy and strong. The kids love to look at the book, and these messages get reinforced with every turn of the page.”

For more information about dental resources in Delaware, visit <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/hsm/files/dentalresourceguide.pdf>.

For assistance locating a dentist, call the Oral Health Services Help Line at 302-622-4540.

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Anyone who is deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf-Blind or speech disabled can contact DPH by dialing 711 first using specialized devices (i.e. TTY, TeleBraille, voice devices). The 711 service is free and to learn more about how it works, please visit delawarerelay.com.

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.